Flag presented to JSC as official VPP Star site

By Mary Peterson

It's the Academy Award of safety and health programs, and Johnson Space Center is a winner!

n a special presentation ceremony held in Bldg. 9 on Monday, July 26, JSC became the only federal entity that has won both OSHA Volunteer Protection Program Star site status and ISO 9000 certification. JSC is now among an elite group of only some 500 companies nationwide to be proclaimed a VPP Star site by OSHA. This is a major accomplishment and a very significant honor. Only one other NASA facility, Langley Research Center, has received a Star designation.

Against a red backdrop emblazoned with the NASA logo, and just feet from the enormous shuttle mockup, an estimated crowd of 300 watched enthusiastically as John Miles, administrator of OSHA Region VI, presented the official VPP Star flag to Center Director George Abbey along with a framed certificate declaring, "The occupational Safety and Health Administration certifies Johnson Space Center meets the requirements of the VPP Star," approved May 25, 1999.

Miles opened his remarks by saying, "It's like coming home, since I worked for 3½ years at JSC during the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo years. In doing so, I know the commitment you have to safety and health, and it is time to recognize NASA [JSC] for what it has done."

Miles commended JSC for the lost-work-day rating at 0.2, a remarkable figure, he said, when compared to the nearest like-type industry, which would be aircraft manufacturing service. It is even more remarkable, considering that JSC is also the largest facility in OSHA's



SC Photo S99-08321 by Benny Benavides

The VPP Star site flag will join others in front of JSC's Bldg. 1 as a testament to the center's commitment to a safe work environment. The VPP Star site flag shown here, held by Rachel Windham, was flown aboard *Columbia* during STS-93 and will be showcased in the lobby of Bldg. 1.

Region VI (Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico) area to be granted Star status.

"You should give yourself, and every employee, a hand," said Miles. With that, a hearty round of applause filled the air.

Master of ceremonies, Rich Dinkel, deputy director of the Safety, Reliability & Quality Assurance Directorate, commented to the crowd that the Star flag presented had flown aboard the just-completed STS-96 mission. It will be mounted in a display case in Bldg. 1, while OSHA has provided another, more durable Star flag to be flown on site.

Upon receiving the flag, Center Director George Abbey thanked those in attendance as well as the extended family of JSC employees, saying, "This is a great event, and I expect it to have even greater meaning in the future. You are safety. Each of you is a member to this, and you will make a difference when we go beyond space station, the moon, and, eventually, on to Mars." It was also appropriate, he said, that the presentation occurred on the 30th anniversary of the Apollo 11 landing on the moon.

"Thank you for everything you are doing now," Abbey said, "and for everything you are going to do for the center in the future. Receiving the VPP Star is a great tribute to your 'stick-to-it-tive-ness' and dedication."

Credit was roundly given to all who contributed to achieving OSHA's most prestigious award, and included, in addition to Abbey, who was billed as the driving force behind JSC safety, Deputy Center Director Capt. Jim Wetherbee, the Executive Safety Committee, Mary McClain,

representing the American Federation of Government Workers, Local #2284, members of the Johnson Space Center Safety Action Team, each VPP point-ofcontact, and each and every JSC civil service and contractor employee.

As a return salute to OSHA, Abbey then presented Miles with a Department of Labor flag that, like the Star flag, had also been flown on STS-96.

Also on hand for the occasion were Bill Klingbeil, OSHA Region VI VPP manager, several members of the VPP on-site inspection team, local OSHA representative Ray Skinner, and several corporate mentors represented who had helped JSC accomplish its goal.

Following the ceremony, a reception was held at Gilruth Center.

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Mission

in shuttle program history and the 19th consecutive landing at the Florida space-port, the last landing at Edwards Air Force Base being STS-76 in March 1996.

About 15 minutes prior to landing, *Columbia* provided a light show for residents of Houston as it sped overhead, visible in the nighttime sky as an orange streak headed for Florida. *Columbia* was at an altitude of about 200,000 feet at the time, traveling about 15 times the speed of sound.

The astronauts returned to Ellington
Field Wednesday morning, July 28, where
they were greeted by a crowd of 500 to
600 people including Vice
President Al Gore, JSC Director George
W. S. Abbey, NASA Associate
Administrator for Space Flight Joseph
Rothenberg, JSC civil servants,
contractor employees and the public.

"I want to congratulate all of the astronauts of STS-93," said Gore. "I also want to thank the training team and everybody at the Johnson Space Center. What a great job!"

Gore reminded the crowd that the mission was unique in a number of ways. "I want to just remind you that there are quite a number of achievements that we are celebrating here. First of all, Jeff Ashby, who was born in Dallas, completed his first flight. Steve Hawley now has the unique distinction of flying on two of the "Great Observatory" missions, having also helped deploy the Hubble Space Telescope in 1990. And Cady Coleman was the one who actually was in

charge of the deployment of the telescope. We want to congratulate Cady Coleman for successfully deploying the Chandra Telescope. Michel Tognini of France has conducted science on both the Mir and, now, the space shuttle. And, of course, we have the very first [woman] commander of the space shuttle."

In introducing Collins,
Gore said that she "stands
here as a hero to all girls
and boys, women and men, Americans and
people all over the world as the very first
commander of the space shuttle."

Collins commented on the public's intense interest in space exploration. "As I travel across the country and talk to people throughout America, there is so much interest in the space program." She said that she is constantly asked why the shuttle program isn't covered more on television. "There really is a lot of interest out there, and I think we need to tap into that."

Collins thanked the STS-93 Training
Team including Lisa Reed, training team
lead; Al Park, control instructor; Ed
Schoenstein, DPS/navigation instructor;
Kevin Jennings, systems instructor; Darryl
Davis, communications instructor; Bill
Preston, payloads instructor; Robert
Carter, simulator operator; and Stacie
Hughes, crew scheduler.



Photo by Brian Zemba

Columbia streaks across the night sky above Rocket Park.

Collins closed with a few words on the space shuttle, referring to it as a rocket, a spacecraft, a mini-space station and an airplane. "That shuttle is a fantastic, amazing, tremendous, reliable flying machine,"

Collins said. Ashby related a story that summarizes his thoughts about flying with Commander Collins. "Way back in my flying career, many, many years ago, I had an occasion where I was flying a small airplane with an enlisted man from my squadron," said Ashby. The engine quit and the two did a dead stick landing in the desert. "It was a pretty frightening event. And we walked away. And as we walked away, the young enlisted man told me that he would fly with me anytime. And I felt that was the highest compliment that I could ever be paid as a pilot. Well, last night, I rode through my second dead stick landing with Eileen Collins at the controls. And Eileen, I just want to tell you that I will fly with you again anytime."

Following their speeches, the astronauts met with well-wishers in the crowd and signed autographs.

Left behind in orbit is the Chandra Observatory, which was deployed July 23 during the first day of the mission. The telescope was designed to assist astronomers in their studies of the evolution of the universe. It is intended to help explain the role of black holes, quasars, exploding stars and galactic collisions.

Chandra continues to operate as it was designed, circling the Earth in an elliptical orbit with low and high points slightly above 6,200 miles and just under 87,000 miles. The first images should be transmitted to Earth between mid and late August.